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ROBERT C. RUGGIERO  
JED O. HELIUM  
KATHLEEN YORK



# THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

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### \$50.00 PRIZE WINNER

John M. Grudzien's "Fools and Saviours" is the recipient of this issue's special \$50 award for the best literary work submitted to THE NOISELESS SPIDER by a student.



Yánnis Rítsos

Since the death of Nobel Prize Winner George Seféris in 1971, Yánnis Rítsos is easily the greatest and most influential living poet in Greece. He was born in 1909 in Monemvasía in the southeastern Peloponnésos.

In 1936 his long poem, EPITÁPHIOS (REQUIEM)—later set to music by the composer Míkis Theodorákis—was burned publicly near the Temple of Zeus in Athens on orders of the Metaxás dictatorship. Rítsos has always been very active in working-class and radical struggles, has fought in the Greek Resistance to the Nazis in the early 1940's, and has spent over seven years of his life in hell-holes for Greek political prisoners such as Makrónnisos and Léros. While he was in concentration camps, he managed to continue writing poems which he hid in tin cans and buried. These were eventually smuggled out and clandestinely published. In addition to over 50 volumes of his own poetry, Rítsos has made brilliant translations of such poets as Vladímír Mayakóvsky, Nicholas Guillén, and Alexándr Blok ("The Twelve") into Greek. His magnificent ethno-political epic, ROMIOSÍNI (1966), has been made into a famous folk-cantata by Míkis Theodorákis and has become a battle-cry for Greek patriots and exiles all over the world.

During his imprisonments on various Greek prison-islands, Rítsos fell into the habit of collecting small stones on the beaches and of carving or painting images on them. He is an accomplished artist and many of these stones are extremely beautiful. Rítsos has saved hundreds of these and he often gives them as souvenirs to people who visit him at his home in Athens. It was the gift of three such miniature stone-paintings to me and my family on February 6, 1974, that inspired the short meditation called "Stones."

— *Bertrand Mathieu*

## Kastaniá

Up there, like yesterday, they shot forty.  
Twenty years have gone by. Nobody's spoken their names.  
You understand our life. Each year,  
on a similar day, they've been finding in hiding places  
a ripped canvas, two extinguished braziers, a little incense,  
a basketful of grapes, a candle  
with a black wick. It's been almost impossible to light it.

    The wind's been blowing it out.  
That's why, in the evening, the old women are sitting  
    in the doorways like ancient ikons,  
that's why the eyes of our children have grown  
    large so quickly  
and why our dogs pretend to look elsewhere  
    when policemen pass by.

— *Yánnis Rítsos*

Translated from the Greek by Bertrand Mathieu



## Return

The statues were the first ones to leave. After that it was the turn of the trees, of people, of animals. The place became completely deserted. There was nothing left but the wind.

Some newspapers, some weeds were blowing in the streets.

At night, the lights lit up by themselves.

A man came back, took a look around him,

took out his key, buried it in the ground

as if he were giving it to a subterranean hand,

or as if he were planting a tree. Then he stood up, climbed the marble stairs and looked at the city a long while.

One by one, cautiously, the statues were coming back.

— *Yánnis Rítsos*

Translated from the Greek by Bertrand Mathieu

## **Stones**

(for Yánnis Rítsos)

The sea smoothes the rough edges of the stones  
on the Greek beaches so well  
it's hard to believe they were ever a part  
of this jagged land.

The results are disastrous: they make  
things seem much better than they  
actually are. The water's boiling  
in the garden well. The light of the oranges  
grows cold. The stones  
lie still.

These are realities that can be fully known  
not by listening, but by talking—the poet  
talks to the sea.

He knows the sea means well.

He knows the sea's also condemned to leaving  
things out. He quietly paints back  
on the stones he picks up on the beach  
the images from the mainland they were  
broken from: Two Women. Or a Grieving Girl.  
Or a Troubled Sailor with a Tilted Blue Cap.

Does this make these stones seem less like our own?

— *Bertrand Mathieu*  
Halandri, Greece  
February 15, 1974



## earthwork

my dead tree  
touches tar—  
fences crucifix,  
vines join hands  
in hope

And do I die too  
so you  
can feel?

your footsteps  
disappear,  
imperceptibly

in snow

I sit with green  
obscurity and look  
for masterminds  
of rebirth

— *Claudia Stephens*



## Something to Sing For A Dying Day

“What’s this—an allegory?”

“No; why? Not an allegory—a leaf, just a leaf. A leaf is good. Everything’s good.”

“Everything?”

“Everything.”

— *Brothers Karamazov*

### First Movement

Follow a story long enough and it will end in death. That is something you can count on, anyway. When I was a kid I would read about cowboys and knights, guys who fought everything and won. The stories would all end the same way: ‘ . . . and they lived happily every after’. Later on, late at night when I was alone and lying in the dark, I would think about those stories and I’d wonder what happened next. I mean what happens to you when they say you live happily ever after. It bothered me somehow to think of the cowboys settling down on a farm with a wife and no guns. I never thought of kids. I always felt cheated, as though there was something they didn’t tell me.

### Second Movement

I had not thought it would be that way. The old man never seemed old. We had always called him the old man, but we never thought of him that way. His face was young and lean right up to the end and I used to think he looked like Dempsey. He might have made a good fighter if he had had some confidence in himself. That was the way it was with him. He didn’t do things. So what does this all mean? I don’t know really. All I know is I want to try and remember him and maybe order things. Sometimes I close my eyes and try to imagine his face, but it isn’t any good. I can’t see him anymore. We were never very close, although I sensed there was something he wanted

to tell me. He'd been through a lot. It wasn't easy being a hobo in the '20's. But there are some things you just can't tell a guy. Not like it was anyway. You try but it only ends up sounding glamorous and not like it really was at all. Maybe that is why he was so quiet. I think about that a lot now, and it still doesn't seem all the way right. It was something more. Like why he never became a fighter.

### **Third Movement**

"Don't move him. Just let him lie there. At least let him go without much pain." Billy could hear the men talking and it felt terrible. He hated them and everything for being so detached. They were talking about him in a way he did not like. "That's a bad wound. Keep the flies off it. Christ I wish we had a doctor. I don't know what the hell to do."

### **Fourth Movement**

The boy waved the burning stick in the night air. Its glowing tip made all sorts of wonderful patterns that left an after-image on the retina. Orange-red fire lining and circling in the dark. It was such wonderful fun to be a creator, he thought, and he'd spin around, holding the stick at arm's length making figure eights, circles, waves and lines that would continue into one another without a break if only he moved fast enough. He did not notice the night. Slowly the red tip began to die out, and the boy got more frantic in his waving. He tried desperately to keep the shapes and glowing existence. The lines were not as thick and it became increasingly difficult for him to maintain their continuity. After the stick died out he stood quietly with his arms by his side. He felt cold standing there in the dark, and the sound of the wind made him feel very lonely, very alone. "The fire won't stay, Mommy. It won't stay. The circles won't stay either. All the lines and circles are gone." He wanted to hug his mother and cry, but something changed his mind without his noticing it. He stood alone and felt very cold inside. His mother stroked his blond hair and tried to gentle him. "It's only a stick, dear. You can light another one tomorrow. Fires can't burn forever. We'll light another one

tomorrow.” The little boy knew he was alone now, and didn’t feel like crying anymore. But he was very sad. He was also angry in a way he did not understand. He didn’t care about the sticks anymore, and he thought about his anger. “I don’t want to light any more sticks. I don’t want to light them ever again. I hate them.”

— *John Perry*

### “In July”

canvas was only knitted thread  
when i was younger. for i never  
understood intent. but i remember  
a painting of Gabriel’s pierced me:  
    a windmill had arms braced against a sky  
    of blues and greys.  
    a man stood bent—like a scythe—  
    wielded by wind (desiring earth).

i never thought of life, misery,  
or simple pride of pheasants or  
imagined knights sprouting  
from fields and expanses: Don Quixotes with foolish expressions.  
    i never went that far.  
    i admired the oxen cart  
    though, that never reached  
    canvas quite, forever out of sight  
    tacked to the frame.  
colorful tools and farmers have left me  
like a stalk cut down in its prime.  
and i really feel like that  
with old stories or plays or poems or  
paintings somehow. The meaning’s matured  
but i think i knew pictures much  
    better then/ than now.

— *Ray Holland*

## Fools and Savors

I'm waiting in the canyons  
alone on the hills  
wasting my life away.

Watching my Fathers hands become weary  
my Mothers arms grow cold  
I fled—  
wishing to tell someone how I felt.

Now I bear the working week  
wrapping fish on the pier—  
remaining waterside  
receiving the fisherman's wrath.

Living sparingly these days?  
Oh no, I have pictures and collect pieces  
of old friends lives  
from the newspapers.

I should survive at the least—  
for pain and hunger  
is for fools and saviors.

—Epilogue—  
Daddy, there still is time and place  
that holds memories—  
for a Saturday son . . .

— *John M. Grudzien*

## of childhood

sticky summer nights  
in pajamas and defiance reminds me.  
i longed for the outside  
to chase neighborhood girls  
in cotton frocks  
'round bushes  
watched by a mantis  
    (big beady eyes revolve  
in the midst of dog berry).  
    but in the bedroom  
    strapped into the lap of sleep  
    by tales of night horrors  
    i'd stay and dream and shake.  
mother dabs in the flour of pies  
spreading out knees and thighs and dough.  
father pounds—slung on the motor  
of failing cars—jerking off  
grease thickened parts.  
    all the next day  
    i'd carry 'round secrets  
    like saw dust prints  
    where feet had stomped  
    on way to the kitchen.

— *Ray Holland*



## Interlude

(To Rich Stephani)

Down dark leafed path  
venturing warm vesper wood  
straddling rocks, fallen trees  
pass and drift in forest mist.

Tall thin silhouettes  
reach and touch flick'ring stars.  
Cat and dog on ahead  
stir a pheasant from its nest.

Down slope, neighbor road.  
Mud-sloshed, three-quarter mile  
walk to edge of field.

From on distant tower,  
lulling red light beams.  
Slow train, simmering fog  
soon this hides away.

Fir trees, silent, unflustered,  
lined aside old stonewall.  
Ah! To seize  
cedar's sharp-spined leaves.

Clear quiet, the real quiet.  
Highway's hushed tonight.  
To come to witness conclusion  
for what we are  
and what we are  
lies beneath our feet.

Old Woodbury Rd.,  
Southbury, Connecticut  
— March 8, 1973

— *Austin W. Fenn Jr.*

## Absurd

Absurd, Absurd

The things I heard

The things I thought I saw.

Would you like a lie to dream on?

A minstrel's lay of exotic places

to build your own phantasies?

While I, a mere reality merchant, deal in daily bread and bored—

To tears, to tears we go . . . daily, daily to and forth

A helpless pace we keep out back to show our friends—so  
on and so fro.

Gone through your dream, green door, do you swear they are  
more real?

Set aside some madness for your late years . . .

that's when you need it most.

Madness, like a fire, to keep you warm against the icy intrusions  
of REAL . . . . .

against the cold blast of feeble days and wandering  
hours

Old men and women are not luxurious, just delicate . . .

as bronze

spun from the copper and tin.

Leather-wood pillars on a plain of mirrors . . .

reflecting on their solitude,

Will they tell you of a golden past

Will you leap, unknowing, into their splendor?

Is dreaming the craft?

Living the art?

— *Phillipp Carey*

## Hosanna

Hosanna sing Hosanna  
Let ring new words of prophecy  
    Dark gods of old ages crumble  
    into deserved dust  
    New gods rise from unformed  
    dreams  
Find now new paths the way  
    to worlds untried  
    and as yet unspoiled  
    plant seeds of justice  
    and harvest love.

— *Michael Wright York*

## For C.K. Williams

It wasn't raining  
    really  
But I need this image  
    You know?  
And in the gray bodies  
Raining words  
You stood  
Smiling gently  
    ironically?  
Like some young god  
With shit coming out of your mouth  
And I kept thinking  
The rain's going to wash it all away  
And I kept thinking  
So what?

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

## Samson

That clown of Gaza  
Come down from trials  
Hairless caution upheld  
And mocked to baal-dangling  
Slavery

Demanded by soft scissor  
Broken to gristmill  
Old man slayer  
with reason  
Particle grinding  
For feeding geldings and oxen  
This once rough-hero eyeless  
Beneath the ant hell  
And without pride

Judge fester  
Jehovah traitored  
And the sweet honey baptism  
By domestic bee pinched  
And plucked  
He  
Who had sacked the lion's corpse  
Altar fratricide and symbol.

Now a maiden forever until

A touch of the sun  
And fingers of nature  
And from the skull a forest  
Erupts  
Exploding deserts to the mind  
And triumph upon coined temples  
Ripping apart the mason's ribs  
A warrior again  
Assuming the star-bred fist of gods  
Destroying four walls  
And the smug giggle of courtly eunuchs.

— *Robert C. Ruggiero*

## Cataract

Oh, she.  
She screaming  
She laughing  
and her eyes,  
at midnight,  
like pearls at noon.

Tenement pipe attack  
begins.  
Little hands grabbing  
for morning milk.

In the pot she plants,  
she plants  
a synonym for time.

And she.  
She breathes  
She drowns  
sewn inside  
some baby carriage  
netting

Fish bones sit in her right eye  
too frozen to reflect.

— *Claudia Stephens*

## **The Rogue of Health**

The arctic-wand

And in his course, pioneer

Skua tutored  
In this icy womb  
Predator's balm and oxen's torment  
In this land of cold temples  
He provokes hot laughter

No gospel but dreamed volcano  
No terror but sparkless dawn  
And making glacial pores  
Sweat athletics  
This christ of struggling fire

White tusks to burning flesh  
Hard and meltless for salvation  
Though crazy with heat.

— *Robert C. Ruggiero*

## The Queen's Old Clothes

A Queen,  
she is a queen.  
She sleeps among  
garden flowers—  
every fortnight

lilies, she smells sweet

Her ladies  
dress her  
in silver ribbons.

She races  
past heavy willows  
thru Bluefield  
to Chancingham

It is there she meets  
with parody  
her own  
and the  
night's.

— *Claudia Stephens*



## To Her Rationale

How complex  
You always surrender  
To that funhouse of truths  
And then by my dying you say  
I become part of your roots.

But I am thirst now

And I feel the liquor beneath  
Your skin.  
A sip from the horn ago  
I touched your animation  
The only moment to relax  
In this mythology of drying.

Remember the fingertips of the age?  
The hot humor piercing the mist?

I swear this poor god  
Grows drunk on the memories  
A single drop suffices  
And always with you  
My dumb reservoir  
With you.

— *Jed O. Helium*  
Barsoom Farm  
Arizona

i reached to bite my nails  
and ate the ticket.  
    imagine my surprise  
        only blood tipped fingers.  
the window shades flap  
    in and out  
        in and out like scabs.  
        the night oozes.  
        it is an old wound.  
the train rumbles  
    passengers scatter  
        intense on the journey.  
even an old couple  
    have in senility a destination.  
        they've slouched in their seat  
        searching for peace.  
they seem so contented  
    sneaking through darkness.  
        perhaps at their age they have found it  
        many seats in front.  
are they eloping?  
    i know a ladder—don't ask how—  
        is in their suitcase  
        having placed them over above once.  
the beer drunks are giggling, insulting  
    cosey in their belching club.  
        they crawl buttocks suspended  
        to the john.  
i feel a kinship only to the country crier  
    in blue baggy pants.  
        next stop he slips away—replaced in monotone.  
        travelers board  
        avoiding the light touch  
        avoiding infection.  
“i want out,” i scream, dying, “out!”  
    the wheels roll—for eighteen minutes  
        in silence.  
stung i follow the actions of traveling men.  
    suitcases shake in the aisles—multiplying  
        and tightlipped. my tongue licks to its route.  
        only the pus awaits.

— Ray Holland

Hazy, through the watery veil we pass, uncleansed.  
Soaked through to the bone with viscous memory—  
Clinging desperately, in ornamental uselessness  
Our histories hang like bats to the rafters of our minds.  
They flap and squeak and stir us up, then lite again  
Leaving us in helpless agitation, . . . wondering, “Why?”

Outside this crumbling wall the commonthink grumbles and  
festers.

“Hunger . . . Thirst . . . Lost, the myth of a soul.”  
The spirits, one by one, die the painless death of  
Centrism and collective honor,

While the histrionic chronicles condemn the greatness now.

When I was young, when I was young  
The better song was left unsung  
A different spice to save the taste  
Of tainted food for thought.

— *Phillipp Carey*

for days i've had insomnia  
unable to sleep it off  
sleep or even cry anymore—  
eyes lie rough on the pillow.  
only confusion melts in fluffed feathers  
like spit of  
a madman—  
pale and spreading.  
but i must have slept  
sometime between contesting  
with blankets with pillows  
with elusive rest.  
for ideas laugh (shrill and wild)  
behind corners-desks-places  
i haven't reached  
in the waking hours.  
(great boards creak—  
life stirs for a moment)  
i imagine all this  
teeth ajar  
drooling impulsively and  
want to roll back  
back—forth  
scream  
take notes or do some  
spontaneous thing.  
(the house closes a sleepy eye and slumbers)  
but then  
stunned i forget the laughter  
the pain the last tear  
won't be completely pried coughed or  
even choked out  
and no one knows i'm awake  
but senseless from dreams  
with  
no way to express them.

— *Ray Holland*

## Sundance

Sundance  
danced  
the dance of the sun  
which is different than  
the dance of the moon  
where his mustache  
would only blur  
the light  
his lip sticking  
in the blurbs of ice cream  
stuck in his mustache  
tripping his tongue  
on love words.

So he took off his shirt  
shaved off his mustache  
and danced  
in the sun  
dripping love  
words  
over her  
like hairshirts  
or tombstones.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

## **Touched the Mole King**

To much rogue inspired  
Highway subtle but giving  
To the underground

Poaching hunger  
With tragic root lust  
Mouthing deep embowelled  
Earth  
Knowledge of the deepest point  
Eventual sprouting  
For star-dropped comet  
Coming home  
And yeaing to such madness  
Ignoring the tax of yellow phlegm.

Roguish in the christ-well  
Not drained clean and resurrected  
But vein muscling  
Pumping music to the heart.

— *Robert C. Ruggiero*

at the philosophy lecture  
he used the brief pause  
to lick wounds.  
the staged corral was bright  
but we all imagined shadows  
somewhere hiding.  
deliberate silence raised  
the dust and whirlwinds  
his frame arose and sighed  
in Western musing.  
the tension flexed  
his hand clenched  
like a crack he spoke.  
“aim carefully—one shot”  
he snorted the smoke  
of life gunned down;  
the pipe slung in his mouth.

— *Ray Holland*

## Delusions

We are all  
awaiting death  
So we sit  
fantasize our ends  
find them glorious, obsessive  
Curiously seeking security  
We are  
in ourselves  
thriving, encouraging  
praying for its moment  
We give it  
our voices  
enclose it behind walls  
where we condemn  
ourselves as slaves  
of the only center.

— *Austin W. Fenn Jr.*



## **Me**

Bees are bees  
lamps are lamps  
horses are horses  
lions are lions  
I am I.

— *Kathleen York*  
Age—6 years

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A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood  
isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast  
surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,  
out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding  
them.



And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans  
of space,  
Carelessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking  
the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the  
ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch  
somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman

